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The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign

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Photo Call

Australia under attack for unlawful treaty to exploit East Timor's oil

Protestors will gather outside the Australian High Commission at 5.30 pm on Tuesday, 8 May, the day Australia's newly-elected Parliament assembles, to condemn the Australian Government for signing a treaty with Indonesia to exploit oil in the seabed between northern Australia and East Timor. They will call on the new Parliament to refuse to ratify this unholy pact to exploit oil resources which do not lawfully belong to Indonesia.

The protestors will remind the Australian Government that East Timor, whose oil is the target of the treaty, has been illegally occupied by Indonesia for nearly 15 years; the war that followed the invasion of East Timor in December 1975 has cost an estimated 200,000 lives, nearly a third of the population of East Timor. Armed resistance is still being waged in the mountains of East Timor, while demonstrations continue to occur in the towns. The most recent calls for independence from Indonesia occurred during the Pope's visit to East Timor last October and when the US ambassador to Jakarta visited the capital, Dili in January.

The accord, known as the Timor Gap Treaty, was signed last December by Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans and Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas. It establishes a Joint Development Zone for exploitation of an off-shore region believed to contain one of the world's largest oil and gas reserves. Australian and multinational petroleum companies have lobbied hard since the mid-1970s for Canberra to conclude this Treaty. Australia's desire to get its hands on these resources explains why Australia is the only industrialised country to have according *de jure* recognition to Indonesia's illegal annexation of East Timor.

In its eagerness to get the oil flowing as quickly as possible, the Hawke Government has put ratification at the top of Parliament's agenda; discussion will commence on 9 May.

Speakers at the protest will include Lord Avebury, a long-time supporter of East Timor's right to self-determination, Ann Clwyd MP from the Opposition Front Bench, who visited East Timor in March 1989, Sasha Stepan, author of a forthcoming book, *Credibility Gap: the Timor Gap Agreement and its International Implications*, and Estevao Cabral, an East Timorese refugee from Lisbon.

Time: 5.30 - 7.00 pm. **Place:** Australia House, Strand, London WC1

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For more information, please contact TAPOL, 081-771-2904 (24 hours)